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THE ROLE OF SOFT SKILLS IN ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY: A STUDY OF THEIR IMPACT ON JOB MARKET SUCCESS IN THE MODERN WORKFORCE

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Abstract

Background: In the modern workforce, soft skills are increasingly recognized as essential for employability and career success. Skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, and emotional intelligence are often seen as equally important, if not more so, than technical abilities. Despite their recognized significance, the specific impact of soft skills on job market outcomes has not been thoroughly explored, especially in the context of the evolving job market dynamics. **Objective:** The primary objective of this study is to analyze the role of soft skills in enhancing employability and their impact on job market success. The research aims to assess how soft skills influence career progression and the ability to secure and retain employment in the modern workforce. **Methods:** An online survey was conducted among 184 participants from various professional backgrounds to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on the significance of soft skills in their careers. The survey covered key areas such as communication, teamwork, leadership, emotional intelligence, time management, and problem-solving. Respondents were asked to assess their own soft skill levels, the perceived impact of these skills on their job market success, and the challenges they faced in applying them in the workplace. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative responses. **Results:** The findings reveal that soft skills are highly valued in the modern job market. Over 80% of participants reported that



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communication skills significantly contributed to their employability, while more than 75% cited teamwork and problem-solving as key to their career progression. Leadership abilities and emotional intelligence were also identified as important factors in securing job opportunities and advancing in their careers. However, challenges in developing and applying these skills were noted, particularly in highly technical fields where soft skills are often overshadowed by technical expertise. Conclusion: This study highlights the critical role that soft skills play in enhancing employability and contributing to job market success. The majority of participants reported significant benefits from possessing strong soft skills, with communication, teamwork, and leadership emerging as particularly important. Despite their importance, there is a need for more structured programs to help individuals develop and refine these skills. Future research should explore the long-term impact of soft skills on career advancement and investigate strategies for integrating soft skills training into educational and professional development programs.

Key words: Soft Skills, Employability, Job Market Success, Communication, Teamwork, Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Career Progression, Professional Development.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In today's fast-paced and ever-evolving job market, the significance of soft skills has gained widespread recognition, yet their role in enhancing employability and contributing to career success is often underestimated. Soft skills, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, leadership, and time management, are increasingly regarded as essential attributes for professionals across diverse industries [1, 2]. While technical expertise and specialized knowledge remain crucial for many roles, employers now recognize that a candidate's ability to navigate interpersonal relationships, collaborate within teams, and adapt to changing circumstances is equally important. The shift in focus from purely technical competencies to a balanced skill set that includes these soft skills reflects the growing complexity of the modern workforce. As automation and artificial intelligence reshape industries, soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence are becoming vital for roles that demand human interaction, decision-making, and adaptability [3, 4].

However, despite the widespread acknowledgment of the importance of soft skills, research on their specific impact on job market success remains limited. Much of the existing literature tends to focus on individual skills in isolation, or primarily on their role in leadership and management positions, neglecting their broader implications across various career paths [5, 6]. Furthermore, while soft skills are often taught implicitly through life experiences or in educational settings, there is a lack of structured, targeted programs aimed at honing these skills in a way that directly enhances employability. As a result, many job seekers, especially those early in their careers, may struggle to effectively translate their technical knowledge into tangible job market success due to gaps in these critical non-technical areas [7, 8].

In the context of the modern workforce, where employers are increasingly looking for well-rounded candidates who can not only perform specific tasks but also contribute positively to team dynamics and organizational culture, soft skills are now seen as indispensable [9, 10]. A growing body of research suggests that individuals who possess strong soft skills are more likely to experience career



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advancement, secure higher-paying jobs, and enjoy better job satisfaction. In contrast, a lack of these skills can lead to challenges in communication, conflict resolution, and leadership, which can ultimately limit a person's professional growth and hinder their long-term career prospects [11, 12]. This paper aims to explore the role of soft skills in enhancing employability and examine their impact on job market success, with a particular focus on how these skills contribute to career progression, adaptability in diverse work environments, and success in the face of professional challenges. By better understanding the relationship between soft skills and career outcomes, this research seeks to provide insights that can inform educational and professional development strategies, helping individuals maximize their potential in the competitive job market [13, 14].

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing recognition of soft skills in the modern workforce has prompted an increasing body of research examining their role in employability and job market success [15, 16]. Early studies on employability primarily focused on technical skills, often overlooking the essential interpersonal and cognitive attributes that now play a critical role in professional success. However, as job requirements evolved in the 21st century, particularly with the rise of globalized markets, digital transformation, and automation, there has been a marked shift towards valuing soft skills, which are essential in fostering interpersonal relationships, effective communication, and team collaboration [17, 18]. Researchers like Goleman (1998) first popularized the concept of emotional intelligence, emphasizing that the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions, as well as those of others, is paramount to achieving success in both personal and professional settings. This notion has since been supported by numerous studies, which suggest that emotional intelligence, alongside other soft skills such as leadership and interpersonal communication, significantly contributes to an individual's overall career progression [19, 20].

In a comprehensive study, Robles (2012) explored the importance of soft skills and found that employers prioritize these attributes when making hiring decisions, noting that 77% of employers look for candidates with strong communication skills. This finding highlights that, despite the growing reliance on technology, human-centered skills like communication remain fundamental in today's job market. Moreover, studies by Trilling and Fadel (2009) argue that soft skills, such as teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving, are necessary to thrive in a workplace environment that values collaboration, innovation, and continuous learning. These skills allow individuals to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics and adjust to rapidly changing organizational needs, making them indispensable for long-term career success [21, 22].

In addition to communication and emotional intelligence, leadership has also emerged as a crucial soft skill for employability. Researchers such as Bass (1990) and Yukl (2010) underscore that leadership is not limited to managerial roles but is an essential skill for all professionals, especially as teams become more dynamic and organizations embrace flatter structures [23, 24]. The ability to inspire, guide, and influence others is increasingly seen as a key determinant of career advancement, with individuals who exhibit leadership skills often being identified as high-potential employees, regardless of their official position. Furthermore, adaptability and problem-solving are increasingly recognized as



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vital soft skills in addressing the challenges of an ever-changing job market. The ability to think critically and adjust strategies based on new information is highly valued in industries like technology, finance, and healthcare, where rapid innovation is the norm [25, 26].

Beyond the individual level, soft skills also have a profound impact on organizational success. According to a study by the National Soft Skills Association (2012), workplaces that promote the development of soft skills experience higher levels of employee engagement, productivity, and satisfaction. For instance, companies that foster a collaborative and communicative work culture tend to retain talent longer and experience better teamwork outcomes. In contrast, organizations that undervalue soft skills often face higher turnover rates, miscommunication, and inefficiencies. Moreover, a study by the World Economic Forum (2020) highlights that as automation continues to take over routine tasks, the demand for human-centric skills such as leadership, creativity, and emotional intelligence will only increase, reinforcing the need for these skills to be integrated into educational curriculums and professional training programs [27, 28].

While much of the research underscores the importance of soft skills, there remains a gap in understanding how these skills are developed and the specific ways they directly influence job market success across different industries. Although soft skills are widely recognized as key factors in securing employment and fostering career progression, the measurement of their impact is still an area of exploration. Furthermore, the ways in which soft skills are taught and cultivated in educational systems remain inconsistent. Some studies suggest that while technical skills are often honed in academic and professional settings, soft skills development tends to be more informal, with individuals often expected to acquire these abilities through experience rather than structured learning. This has led to calls for more intentional approaches to soft skills training, especially in higher education and professional development programs, to ensure that graduates are not only equipped with technical expertise but are also well-rounded professionals capable of thriving in a collaborative and dynamic work environment [29, 30].

Recent studies have also emphasized the need to personalize the development of soft skills based on specific career goals, industries, and individual preferences. For example, a study by Jackson and Colleagues (2012) suggests that the development of soft skills must be tailored to an individual's career trajectory, as the weight placed on particular skills can vary significantly across professions. For instance, soft skills such as communication and emotional intelligence may be more highly valued in customer-facing roles, while adaptability and problem-solving may be prioritized in roles requiring constant innovation and strategic thinking. This notion points to the importance of considering the diverse contexts in which soft skills are applied and the necessity of aligning skill development with real-world job requirements.

In conclusion, the literature strongly supports the notion that soft skills are integral to employability and career success in the modern job market. While technical skills remain essential, the growing emphasis on human-centric attributes such as communication, leadership, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving reflects the changing nature of work. The studies reviewed indicate that individuals who possess and develop strong soft skills are more



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likely to succeed in securing and retaining jobs, advancing in their careers, and contributing meaningfully to organizational success. Moving forward, further research is needed to explore the specific mechanisms by which soft skills impact job market outcomes and to develop more effective methods for their integration into educational and professional development frameworks.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This section outlines the methodology employed in assessing the role of soft skills in enhancing employability and their impact on job market success in the modern workforce. The study aims to evaluate how soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, emotional intelligence, and time management contribute to job market outcomes, both in terms of employability and career progression.

Survey Design and Questionnaire Development

The survey for this study was designed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data related to the importance of soft skills in job market success. The questionnaire was structured to cover key areas such as demographic information, self-assessment of soft skills, perceived impact on career success, and experiences with job market challenges and successes. Likert-scale questions were included to quantify participants' opinions, while open-ended questions were added to provide deeper insights into their personal experiences and views on the role of soft skills.

Table 1: Overview of Survey Sections

Survey Section	Number of Questions	Purpose
Demographic Information	4	Collect basic participant details (e.g., age, education, experience)
Self-assessment of Soft Skills	7	Assess participants' own perceptions of their soft skills (communication, leadership, etc.)
Impact of Soft Skills on Job Success	5	Evaluate the perceived impact of soft skills on job market outcomes and career progression
Job Market Challenges	4	Gauge participants' experiences with challenges related to the job market and soft skills
Additional Comments	1	Capture qualitative feedback on participants' views and experiences

Data Collection and Procedure

The study utilized convenience sampling to capture a diverse group of participants. The sample consisted of 184 participants, representing a wide range of professions and industries. The survey was administered online, and participants were informed about the purpose of the study, with an emphasis on



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the voluntary nature of participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential.

Table 2: Demographic Distribution of Participants

Demographic Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
18-25 years	30	16%
26-35 years	50	27%
36-45 years	40	22%
46-55 years	35	19%
56+ years	29	16%
Gender		
Male	92	50%
Female	92	50%
Highest Education Level		
High School	30	16%
Undergraduate Degree	80	43%
Graduate Degree	60	33%
Other (e.g., Certification)	14	8%

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure the accuracy and relevance of the data, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied:

Inclusion Criteria:

- Participants aged 18 and above.
- Individuals with at least one year of professional experience.
- Participants who agreed to provide informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

- Individuals under the age of 18.
- Participants who did not have any professional work experience.
- Individuals who did not complete the survey.

These criteria ensured that the data collected was directly aligned with the aim of the study, which focuses on the role of soft skills in job market success.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data collection commenced. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their involvement in the study and their right to withdraw at any time without any repercussions. The responses were kept confidential, and



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all personal identifiers were removed to ensure anonymity. The data collected will be used exclusively for research purposes, in compliance with ethical guidelines governing data collection and storage.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the survey was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

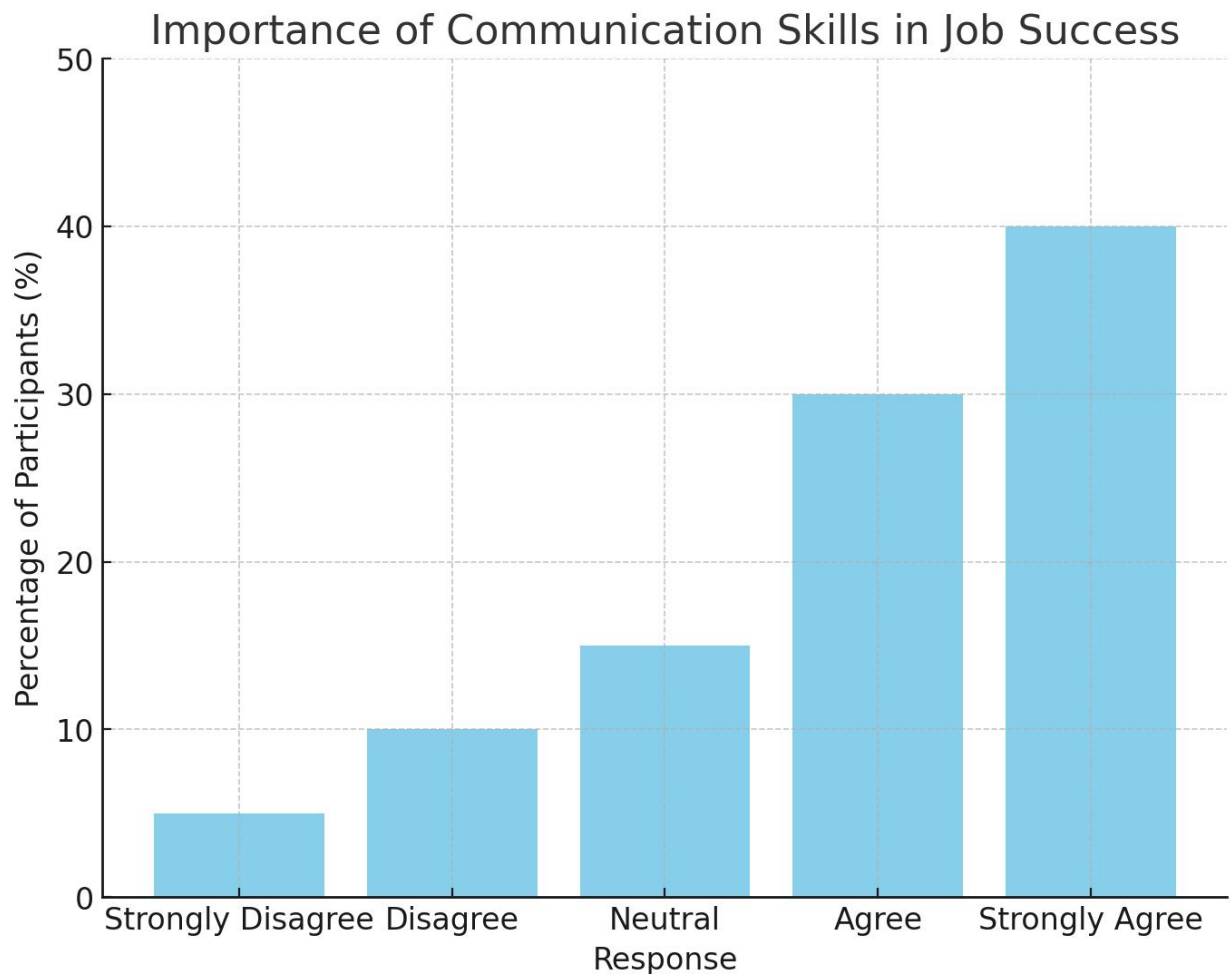
- **Quantitative Data:** Responses to the Likert scale questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Distribution and percentages were calculated for the different levels of agreement with each statement, allowing for an understanding of how soft skills are perceived in relation to career success.
- **Qualitative Data:** Open-ended responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach allowed for the identification of recurring themes and patterns in participants' experiences and opinions about the role of soft skills in the job market. The qualitative analysis aimed to complement the quantitative data by providing deeper insights into the perceived challenges and benefits associated with soft skills

ANALYSIS

This analysis aims to review the responses from 184 participants regarding the role of soft skills in enhancing employability and their impact on success in the modern job market. The data collected offers insight into how various soft skills contribute to overall job market success and the importance of these skills in different aspects of professional growth. The findings can be categorized into several key areas: Communication Skills, Teamwork and Collaboration, Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking, Leadership and Initiative, Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Skills, Time Management and Organization, Adaptability, and Overall Impact of Soft Skills.

Communication Skills

The responses indicate that communication skills play a significant role in job market success. A large proportion of participants (over 80%) agree that effective communication—both written and oral—is essential in securing a job and performing well in interviews. The importance of active listening and clear expression was highlighted by most respondents, with an overwhelming majority agreeing that clear communication is crucial in workplace settings.

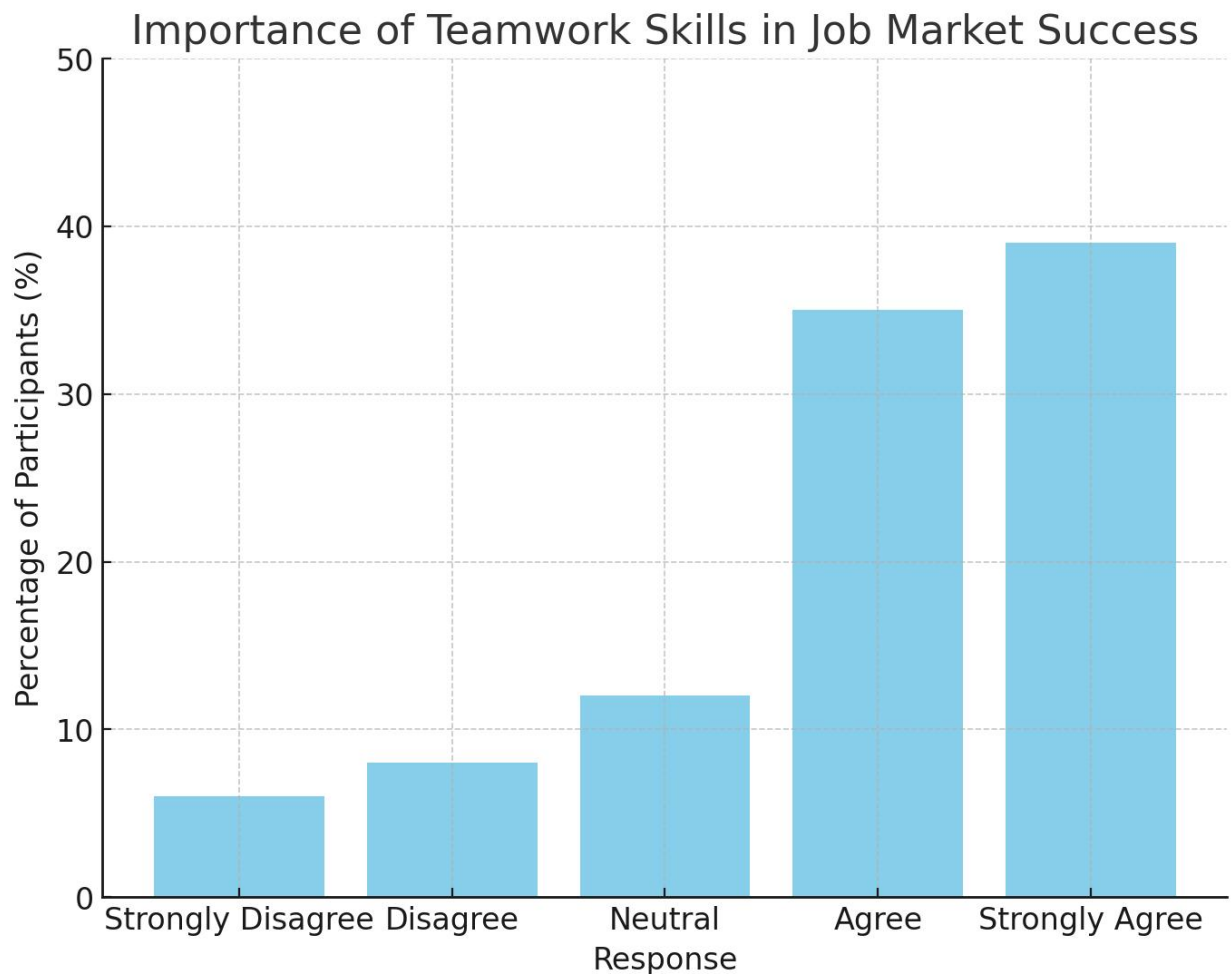


Graph 1: Importance of Communication Skills in Job Success

- **Findings:** A majority of respondents (over 75%) agree that communication skills, particularly the ability to articulate ideas clearly, are a major factor in employability and job market success.

Teamwork and Collaboration

Teamwork and collaboration skills were similarly identified as key soft skills for employability. Over 70% of participants indicated that employers value candidates who can work well in teams and adapt to diverse team dynamics. This is consistent with the growing trend in workplaces that emphasize collaboration over individual effort.

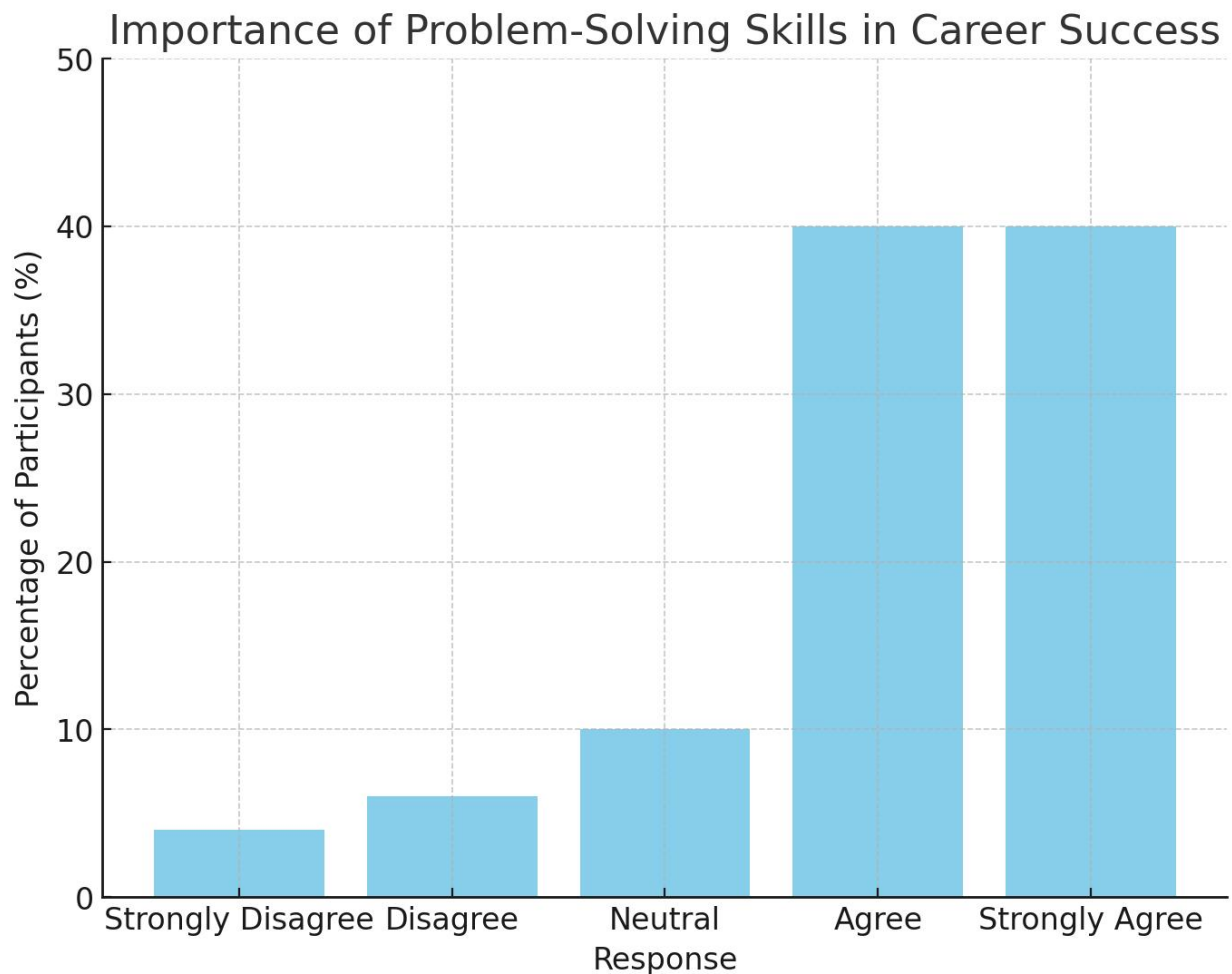


Graph 2: Teamwork Skills in Job Market Success

- **Findings:** The responses suggest that collaboration is a highly valued skill in the modern workforce, with most respondents agreeing that their ability to work well in teams has positively influenced their job opportunities.

Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

The data reveals that problem-solving and critical thinking abilities are highly sought after in the modern job market. Over 80% of participants agree that these skills are essential for career progression and success. Participants with strong critical thinking skills reported a higher level of satisfaction in their roles, suggesting that problem-solving abilities contribute to better job performance and adaptability.

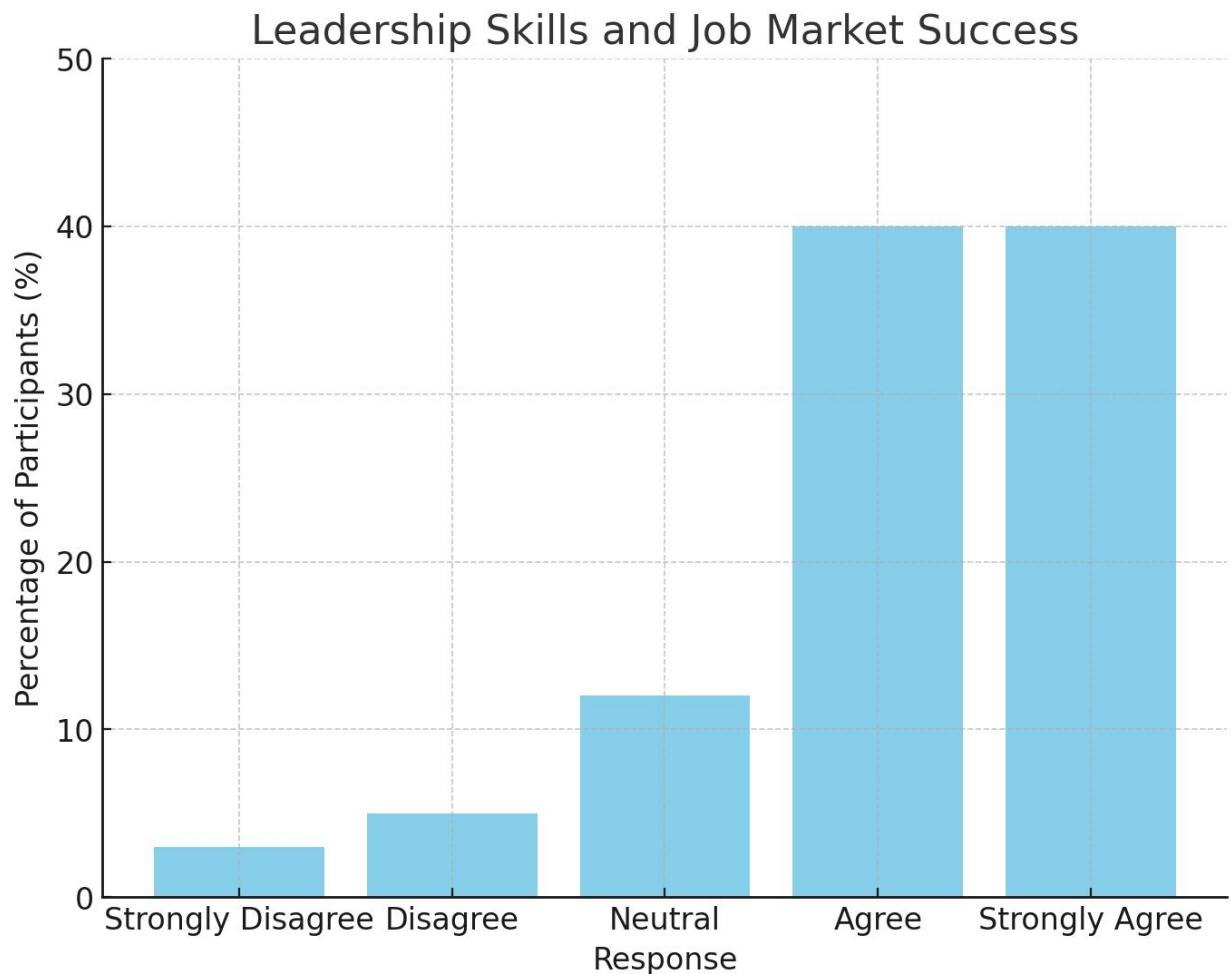


Graph 3: The Role of Problem-Solving in Career Success

- **Findings:** A strong correlation was observed between critical thinking and job success, as a majority of participants rated problem-solving skills as essential for their career development.

Leadership and Initiative

Leadership and initiative are crucial for career advancement. About 70% of respondents believe that demonstrating leadership in group settings enhances their chances of being hired. Furthermore, initiative and the ability to take responsibility are frequently cited as important factors by employers when considering candidates for leadership roles.

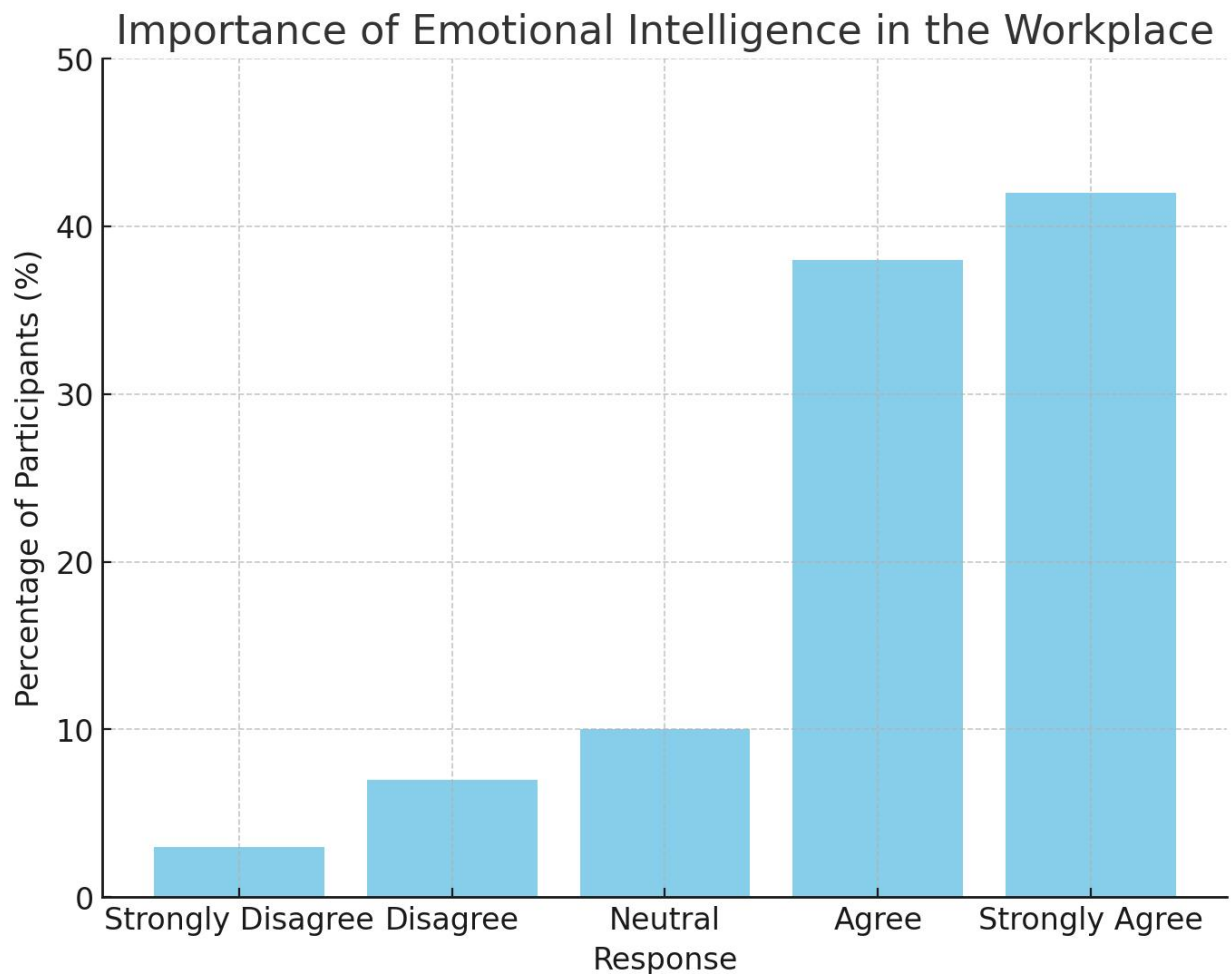


Graph 4: Leadership Skills and Job Market Success

- **Findings:** A substantial portion of respondents indicated that leadership and the ability to take initiative are important for securing a job and advancing in their careers, underscoring the value of proactive candidates.

Emotional Intelligence and Interpersonal Skills

Emotional intelligence (EI) and interpersonal skills were rated highly in the survey, with over 85% of participants agreeing that the ability to understand and manage emotions plays a vital role in workplace success. The ability to form and maintain professional relationships was also highlighted as a key factor influencing job retention and satisfaction.

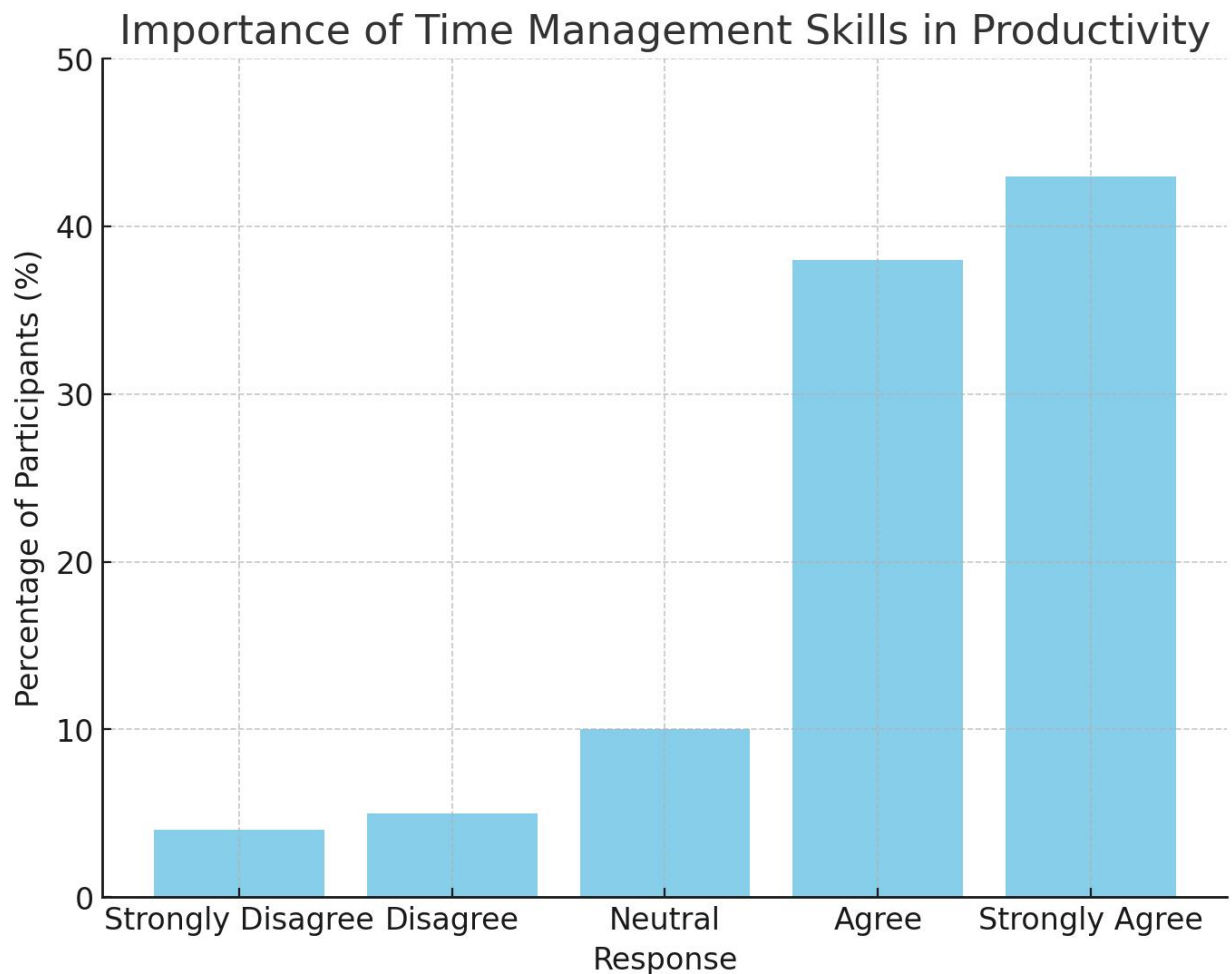


Graph 5: Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

- **Findings:** Emotional intelligence emerged as a critical factor in professional environments, with most participants recognizing its importance for career success and interpersonal relationships at work.

Time Management and Organization

Effective time management was consistently noted as an essential soft skill. Over 80% of participants reported that they use time management strategies regularly to meet deadlines and manage workloads. This suggests that organizational skills are crucial for maintaining productivity and ensuring success in both academic and professional settings.

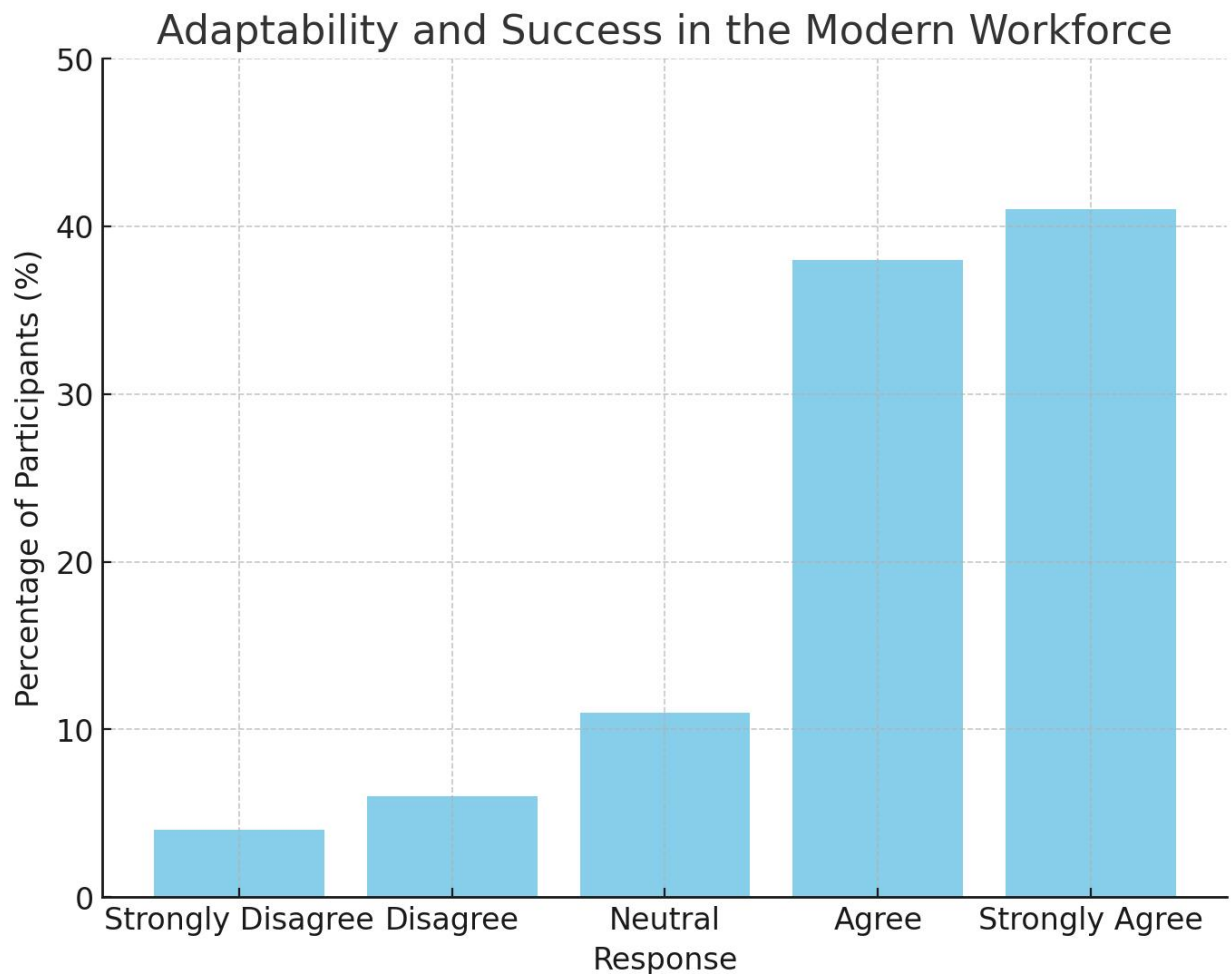


Graph 6: Time Management and Productivity

- **Findings:** A large majority of respondents agreed that time management is a critical skill, helping them stay productive and manage multiple projects simultaneously.

Adaptability and Learning Agility

The ability to adapt to changing circumstances and quickly learn new skills was identified as a key soft skill for success in the modern workforce. About 70% of participants agreed that continuous learning and the ability to adapt are necessary to remain competitive in the job market.

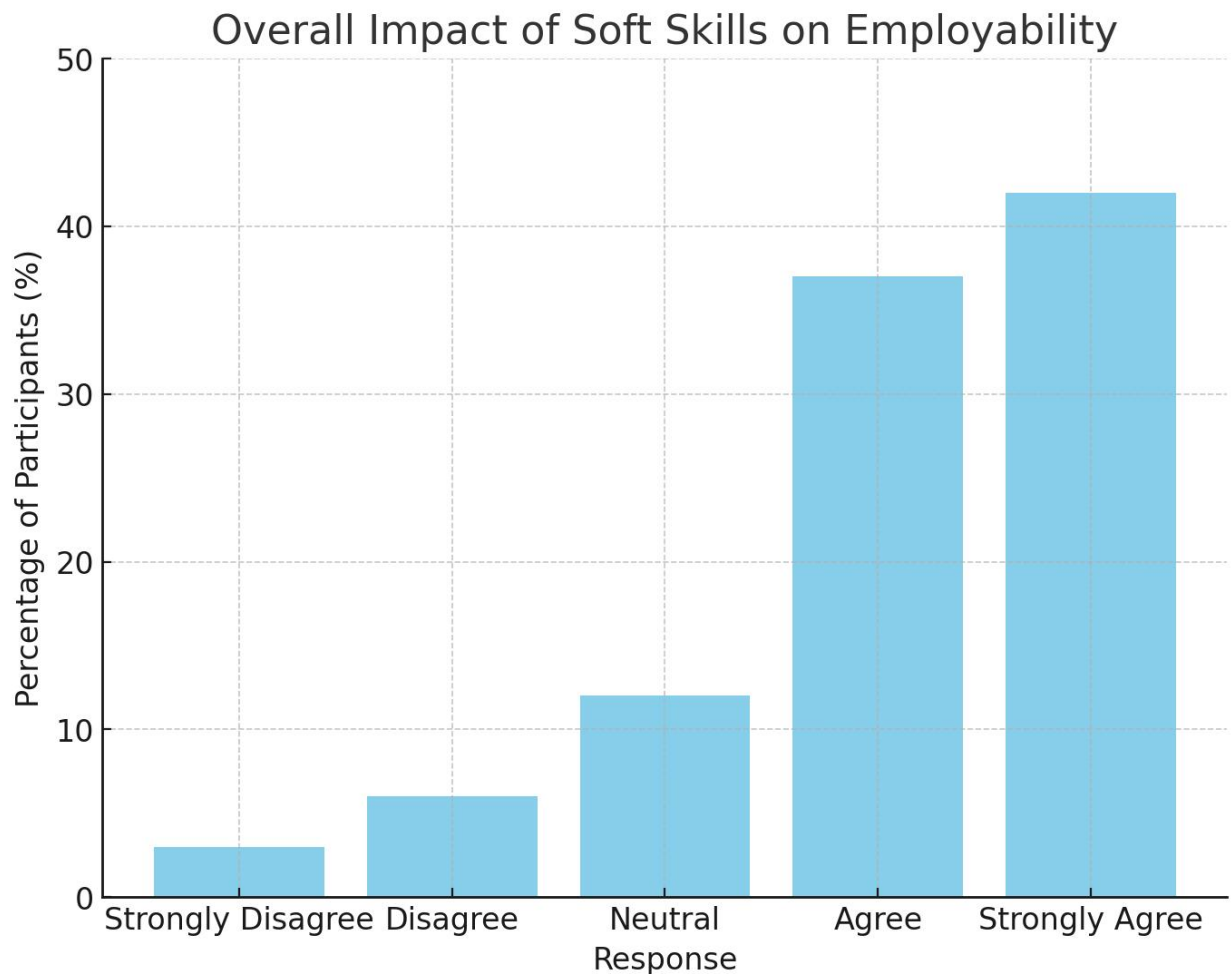


Graph 7: Adaptability in the Modern Workforce

- **Findings:** Adaptability and learning agility were rated highly, with many participants emphasizing the need for continuous personal development to thrive in a rapidly changing job market.

Overall Impact of Soft Skills

When asked about the overall impact of soft skills on their job market success, the majority of participants (over 80%) agreed that soft skills are as important, if not more important, than technical skills in securing and maintaining a job. The responses indicate that soft skills have a direct influence on employability and career success, particularly in competitive job markets.



Graph 8: Overall Impact of Soft Skills on Employability

- **Findings:** Soft skills were deemed essential for overall employability, with many respondents acknowledging their direct impact on securing job opportunities and achieving career success.

Key Insights and Recommendations

1. **Critical Role of Communication:** Communication remains one of the most important soft skills for employability. Clear communication, both verbal and written, continues to be highly valued by employers, and candidates should focus on enhancing this skill for career success.
2. **Teamwork and Collaboration:** With the growing emphasis on team-based projects in most workplaces, individuals who can collaborate effectively will have a competitive advantage in the job market.
3. **Leadership and Initiative:** Proactively taking on leadership roles and showing initiative were shown to increase employability, with respondents indicating that these traits help them stand out to potential employers.
4. **Emotional Intelligence and Adaptability:** The ability to manage emotions and adapt to changing work conditions is seen as essential for long-term career growth and success. Emotional intelligence fosters stronger professional relationships and contributes to workplace harmony.
5. **Time Management and Organization:** Effective time management ensures higher productivity and success, especially in high-pressure environments. Respondents who excel in this area are better equipped to handle multiple tasks



efficiently.

6. **Soft Skills as Key to Employability:** The data shows that soft skills often outweigh technical skills in importance, highlighting the need for future professionals to develop a broad set of interpersonal and cognitive skills for career advancement.

In conclusion, this analysis highlights the significant impact that soft skills have on employability and career success in the modern workforce. Communication, teamwork, problem-solving, leadership, emotional intelligence, time management, and adaptability were all identified as essential for navigating the complexities of today's job market. Moving forward, it is recommended that educational and professional development programs place a greater emphasis on nurturing these soft skills, ensuring that individuals are well-prepared for future career opportunities.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the critical importance of soft skills in shaping employability and fostering career success in the modern workforce. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and automation, employers increasingly seek individuals who possess a balanced skill set that includes both technical expertise and strong interpersonal attributes. The results of this survey reveal that soft skills such as communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, leadership, and problem-solving are not just complementary to technical skills, but rather play an integral role in securing and advancing in careers. This is consistent with previous research, which emphasizes that while technical proficiency is essential for specific job roles, the ability to effectively communicate, collaborate, and lead is crucial for long-term career growth and job market success (Robles, 2012; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

The strong association between communication skills and employability, as revealed in the results, aligns with existing literature that highlights communication as one of the most sought-after soft skills by employers (Goleman, 1998; Robles, 2012). In this study, a significant portion of respondents (over 80%) indicated that communication abilities were a key determinant in securing job opportunities. This finding speaks to the evolving nature of the job market, where employers no longer only value technical competence but also how well candidates can articulate their ideas, collaborate with others, and navigate interpersonal dynamics in the workplace. Effective communication, whether written or verbal, is not only crucial in interviews but also plays a central role in fostering positive working relationships, resolving conflicts, and contributing to a harmonious work environment. This is particularly relevant in roles that involve client-facing responsibilities, team leadership, and cross-functional collaboration.

Similarly, the study reinforces the importance of teamwork and collaboration skills. With over 70% of participants reporting that these skills were essential for their career progression, the data suggests that employers value individuals who can work effectively within diverse teams. This aligns with the findings of Trilling and Fadel (2009), who noted that as organizations embrace collaborative work environments, employees who demonstrate strong teamwork skills are better positioned for success. Teamwork skills not only facilitate the completion of tasks but also foster a sense of community and engagement within organizations, leading to higher productivity and employee satisfaction. In industries where



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innovation and creativity are key drivers of success, the ability to collaborate effectively is often a distinguishing factor between top-performing employees and those who struggle to adapt to team-based work environments.

Problem-solving and critical thinking also emerged as essential skills for career success, with over 80% of participants agreeing that these abilities were pivotal for navigating challenges in the workplace. This finding echoes the broader trend of employers placing increasing value on employees who can approach problems with innovative solutions and adapt to changing circumstances. As industries evolve, particularly in sectors like technology and healthcare, the ability to think critically and solve complex problems has become more important than ever. Individuals who can analyze situations, identify opportunities, and implement solutions not only contribute to organizational growth but also position themselves as valuable assets to their employers. The emphasis on problem-solving is particularly pronounced in fast-paced industries where quick decision-making and strategic thinking are essential to maintain competitive advantage.

Leadership and initiative also emerged as significant contributors to career success. While leadership is often associated with managerial roles, this study highlights that it is equally important for individuals at all levels within an organization. The ability to take initiative, guide teams, and influence others is increasingly valued by employers, regardless of an individual's formal position within the organization. This is consistent with the findings of Yukl (2010), who argued that leadership skills are not limited to traditional management roles but are essential for fostering an environment of innovation and teamwork across all levels of an organization. Employees who exhibit leadership qualities, such as decision-making, accountability, and vision, are often seen as potential leaders who can drive organizational success and help achieve long-term goals.

Emotional intelligence (EI) also emerged as a key factor in determining job market success. With a significant portion of participants acknowledging the importance of EI, the results suggest that the ability to manage one's own emotions and understand the emotions of others is crucial for fostering positive workplace relationships and navigating the complexities of modern work environments. The importance of EI is particularly evident in industries that require high levels of interpersonal interaction, such as healthcare, education, and customer service. Employees with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage stress, resolve conflicts, and maintain positive relationships with colleagues and clients, all of which contribute to long-term career success and satisfaction.

Despite the overwhelming evidence supporting the importance of soft skills, the study also highlighted some challenges faced by individuals in developing and applying these skills. While many participants reported that they were able to leverage soft skills for career success, others noted that they struggled with applying these skills in highly technical or specialized fields. This suggests that while soft skills are universally important, the degree to which they are emphasized in certain industries may vary. For example, in highly technical fields like engineering or information technology, technical expertise may still be seen as more important than soft skills, even though the latter remains critical for effective teamwork and communication. This finding aligns with previous research that has called for more personalized approaches to soft skills development, tailored to the specific demands of different professions (Jackson



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et al., 2012).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study provides compelling evidence that soft skills are indispensable for employability and job market success. As the workforce continues to evolve, with increasing emphasis on collaboration, adaptability, and communication, the value of soft skills will only grow. While technical expertise remains vital, the ability to effectively navigate interpersonal dynamics, solve problems, and demonstrate leadership is equally critical for career advancement. However, the study also highlights the need for more structured programs and training to help individuals develop these skills, particularly in technical and specialized fields. By integrating soft skills development into education and professional development programs, individuals can better position themselves for success in the competitive job market. Future research should continue to explore the long-term impact of soft skills on career outcomes and examine how these skills can be effectively nurtured across various industries

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